

Boom! The ground shook beneath me. I stumbled, nearly falling into the ash covered slope. Behind me, the volcano screamed a deep, earth shattering roar that split the sky in two. It thundered ear splitting uproar and I felt like I was deaf. I didn't look back. I couldn't. Hot wind slammed into my back as I ran, every step crunching over cracked earth. The sky had turned a sickly grey, and hot ash rained down like burning snow. My throat felt like sandpaper. Each breath scorched my lungs, and my legs were turning to jelly, but the sound behind us kept pushing me forward. A deep, awful roar. The sound of the earth breaking apart.

The air stank of smoke and burnt matches, like rotten eggs and metal. I yelled, choking on ash, "Keep going! Don't stop!" The world looked like a nightmare, like someone had erased all colour in the world and lit the sky on fire. A boulder, still glowing red, crashed metres away from me. Heat slapped my skin like a whip. My legs screamed for rest and I felt like I was going to collapse. My chest felt like it was going to jump out of me.

"There! A cave!" I pointed and cried to warn the others, running towards a jagged shadow in the rocks. We stumbled across clumps of smoking branches, our shoes nearly melting, and dove into the darkness. The heat followed us to the entrance. Inside, it was cool, silent. My heart pounded so hard I could hear it. The air tasted like damp rock and dust but it was much better than smoke and ash. I collapsed onto the stone floor, coughing, sweating and trembling. *We could have died out there.*

We listened. Something scratched in the darkness. It was not the volcano. It was something else. I turned on my torch. There was a shadow silhouetted in the distance. It was much more than just a human. I wasn't sure which was more dangerous, the fire above us or the secret buried below. All I knew was we were not the only ones in the cave.